

Sinclair  
Broadcasting's  
decision to force  
their stations to  
air an anti-Kerry  
documentary days  
before the election  
is a clear example  
of the dangers of  
media consolidation.

Sinclair uses the  
public airwaves free  
of charge, and is  
obligated by law to  
serve the public  
interest. But when  
large companies  
control the  
airwaves, we get  
more of what's good  
for the bottom line  
and less of what we  
need for our  
democracy.

In September 2001,  
Sinclair  
Broadcasting  
required its  
affiliates to air  
messages "conveying  
full support" for  
the Bush  
administration. At a  
Baltimore affiliate,  
WBFF "officials  
required news and  
sports anchors, even  
a weather  
forecaster, to read  
the messages, "which  
included statements  
such as "[the  
station] wants you  
to know that we  
stand 100% behind  
our President."

In July 2003,  
Sinclair  
Broadcasting refused  
to allow WMSN TV -  
its FOX affiliate in  
Madison, WI - to air  
a DNC advertisement  
that featured a clip  
of President Bush  
making the false  
claim "Saddam  
Hussein recently  
sought significant  
quantities of  
uranium from Africa"  
in his 2003 State of

the Union Address.

Sinclair  
Broadcasting has  
fired much of the  
staff for the local  
affiliates it owns,  
instead producing  
content for its  
local stations from  
a central facility  
outside Baltimore  
which it then airs  
on "local" news  
broadcasts. The  
centralized content  
features nightly  
commentary by  
Sinclair corporate  
communications chief  
Mark Hyman. Hyman  
regularly refers to  
the French as  
"cheese-eating  
surrender monkeys,"  
the so-called  
liberal media as the  
"hate-America  
crowd," and  
progressives as "the  
lonely left" On one  
recent commentary,  
Hyman called members  
of Congress who  
voted against a  
recent resolution  
affirming the  
righteousness of the  
Iraq war  
"unpatriotic  
politicians who hate  
our military."

In March, it was  
discovered that the  
Bush Administration  
was producing  
"television news  
stories, written and  
paid for by the  
government, which  
have the appearance  
of legitimate news  
segments delivered  
by independent  
reporters," and  
distributing them to  
local newscasts as a  
way of promoting  
administration  
policies. On the  
broadcasts, a public  
relations  
professional named  
Karen Ryan pretended

to be a reporter.  
The Sinclair  
Broadcasting station  
WPGH in Pittsburgh,  
which fired much of  
its news staff in  
favor of feeds from  
the centralized  
Sinclair "newsroom"  
in Baltimore, was  
among the stations  
that aired the  
propaganda.

Sinclair's actions  
show why we need to  
strengthen media  
ownership rules, not  
weaken them. They  
show why the license  
renewal process  
needs to involve  
more than a returned  
postcard. Please  
help save our  
democracy.

Sincerely,